

SUGGESTED CLASSICAL MONOLOGUES (FEMALE)

1. Tamora – *Titus Andronicus* by William Shakespeare

Act 2 Scene 3

Tamora

Have I not reason, think you, to look pale?
These two have 'ticed me hither to this place:
A barren detested vale you see it is.
The trees though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
O'ercome with moss, and baleful mistletoe;
Here never shines the sun, here nothing breeds,
Unless the nightly owl, or fatal raven:
And when they show'd me this abhorred pit,
They told me here at dead time of the night,
A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes,
Ten thousand swelling toads, as many urchins,
Would make such fearful and confused cries,
As any mortal body hearing it,
Should straight fall mad, or else die suddenly.
No sooner had they told this hellish tale,
But straight they told me they would bind me here,
Unto the body of a dismal yew,
And leave me to this miserable death.
And then they call'd me foul adulteress,
Lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms
That ever ear did hear to such effect.
And, had you not by wondrous fortune come,
This vengeance on me had they executed:
Revenge it, as you love your mother's life,
Or be ye not henceforth call'd my children.

2. Julia – *Two Gentlemen of Verona* by William Shakespeare

Act 4 Scene 4

Julia

And she shall thank you for't, if e'er you know her.
A virtuous gentlewoman, mild, and beautiful
I hope my master's suit will be but cold,
Since she respects my mistress' love so much.
Alas, how love can trifle with itself:
Here is her picture: let me see, I think,
If I had such a tire, this face of mine
Were full as lovely as is this of hers;
And yet the painter flatter'd her a little,
Unless I flatter with myself too much.
Her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow;
If that be all the difference in his love,
I'll get me such a colour'd periwig:
Her eyes are grey as glass, and so are mine;
Ay, but her forehead's low, and mine's as high:
What should it be that he respects in her
But I can make respective in myself
If this fond Love were not a blinded god?
Come, shadow, come, and take this shadow up,
For 'tis thy rival: O thou senseless form,
Thou shalt be worshipp'd, kiss'd, loved and adored!
And were there sense in his idolatry,
My substance should be statue in thy stead.
I'll use thee kindly for thy mistress' sake,
That used me so: or else by Jove, I vow,
I should have scratch'd out your unseeing eyes,
To make my master out of love with thee.

3. Constance – *King John* by William Shakespeare

Act 3 Scene 1

CONSTANCE

War! war! no peace! peace is to me a war:
O Lymoges! O Austria! thou dost shame
That bloody spoil; thou slave, thou wretch, thou coward,
Thou little valiant, great in villany,
Thou ever strong upon the stronger side;
Thou Fortune's champion, that dost never fight
But when her humorous ladyship is by
To teach thee safety: thou art perjured too,
And soothest up greatness. What a fool art thou,
A ramping fool, to brag and stamp and swear
Upon my party: Thou cold-blooded slave,
Hast thou not spoke like thunder on my side?
Been sworn my soldier, bidding me depend
Upon thy stars, thy fortune and thy strength,
And dost thou now fall over to my foes?
Thou wear a lion's hide, doff it for shame,
And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs.

4. Lady Percy – *King Henry IV Part 1* by William Shakespeare

Act 2 Scene 3

LADY PERCY

O, my good lord, why are you thus alone?
For what offence have I this fortnight been
A banish'd woman from my Harry's bed?
Tell me (sweet lord) what is't that takes from thee
Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?
Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth?
And start so often when thou sit'st alone?
Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks?
And given my treasures and my rights of thee
To thick-eyed musing and cursed melancholy?
In thy faint slumbers, I by thee have watch'd,
And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars:
Speak terms of manage to thy bounding steed,
Cry courage to the field. And thou hast talk'd
Of sallies, and retires; of trenches, tents,
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,
Of prisoners' ransom and of soldiers slain,
And all the currents of a heady fight.
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war
And thus hath so bestirr'd thee in thy sleep,
That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow
Like bubbles in a late-disturbed stream;
And in thy face strange motions have appear'd,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest. O, what portents are these?
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not.

5. Helena – *All's Well That Ends Well* by William Shakespeare

Act 3 Scene 2

HELENA

Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France.

Nothing in France until he has no wife:

Thou shalt have none Rousillon, none in France,

Then hast thou all again: Poor lord, is't I

That chase thee from thy country, and expose

Those tender limbs of thine, to the event

Of the none-sparing war? and is it I,

That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou

Wast shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark

Of smoky muskets? O you leaden messengers,

That ride upon the violent speed of fire,

Fly with false aim, move the still-peering air

That sings with piercing, do not touch my lord:

Whoever shoots at him, I set him there;

Whoever charges on his forward breast,

I am the caitiff that do hold him to't;

And though I kill him not, I am the cause

His death was so effected: better 'twere

I met the ravin lion when he roar'd

With sharp constraint of hunger: better 'twere

That all the miseries which nature owes

Were mine at once. No, come thou home Rousillon,

Whence honour but of danger wins a scar,

As oft it loses all. I will be gone:

My being here it is, that holds thee hence:

Shall I stay here to do't? no, no, although

The air of paradise did fan the house

And angels officed all: I will be gone,

That pitiful rumour may report my flight,

To console thine ear. Come night; end day,

For with the dark (poor thief) I'll steal away.

6. Vittoria – *The White Devil* by John Webster

Act 4 Scene 2

Vittoria

What have I gain'd by thee but infamy?
Thou hast stain'd the spotless honour of my house,
And frighted thence noble society:
Like those which, sick o' th' palsy, and retain
Ill-scenting foxes 'bout them, are still shunn'd
By those of choicer nostrils. What do you call this house?
Is this your palace? Did not the judge style it
A house of penitent whores? Who sent me to it?
Who hath the honour to advance Vittoria
To this incontinent college? Is 't not you?
Is 't not your high preferment? Go, go, brag
How many ladies you have undone, like me.
Fare you well, sir; let me hear no more of you.
I had a limb corrupted to an ulcer,
But I have cut it off: and now I 'll go
Weeping to heaven on crutches. For your gifts,
I will return them all, and I do wish
That I could make you full executor
To all my sins - O that I could toss myself
Into a grave as quickly: for all thou art worth
I 'll not shed one tear more - I 'll burst first.

7. Duchess – *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster

Act 1 Scene 3

Duchess. Now she pays it.
The misery of us, that are born great,
We are forc'd to woo, because none dare woo us;
And as a tyrant doubles with his words,
And fearfully equivocates: so we
Are forc'd to express our violent passions
In riddles, and in dreams, and leave the path
Of simple virtue, which was never made
To seem the thing it is not. Go, go brag
You have left me heartless; mine is in your bosom,
I hope 'twill multiply love there. You do tremble:
Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh
To fear, more than to love me. Sir, be confident:
What is 't distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir;
'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
Kneels at my husband's tomb. Awake, awake, man!
I do here put off all vain ceremony,
And only do appear to you, a young widow
That claims you for her husband, and, like a widow,
I use but half a blush in't.

8. Beatrice – The Changeling by Middleton & Rowley

Act 2 Scene 1

Beatrice

How wise is Alsemero in his friend!
It is a sign he makes his choice with judgment.
Then I appear in nothing more approv'd
Than making choice of him;
For 'tis a principle, he that can choose
That bosom well, who of his thoughts partakes,
Proves most discreet in every choice he makes.
Methinks I love now with the eyes of judgment
And see the way to merit, clearly see it.
A true deserver like a diamond sparkles,
In darkness you may see him, that's in absence,
Which is the greatest darkness falls on love;
Yet is he best discern'd then
With intellectual eyesight. What's Piracquo
My father spends his breath for? And his blessing
Is only mine as I regard his name,
Else it goes from me, and turns head against me,
Transform'd into a curse. Some speedy way
Must be remembered; he's so forward too,
So urgent that way, scarce allows me breath
To speak to my new comforts.

SUGGESTED CLASSICAL MONOLOGUES (MALE)

1. Aaron – *Titus Andronicus* by William Shakespeare

Act 5 Scene 1

Aaron

Ay, that I had not done a thousand more:
Even now I curse the day, and yet I think,
Few come within the compass of my curse,
Wherein I did not some notorious ill,
As kill a man, or else devise his death,
Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it,
Accuse some innocent and forswear myself,
Set deadly enmity between two friends,
Make poor men's cattle break their necks,
Set fire on barns and hay-stacks in the night,
And bid the owners quench them with their tears:
Oft have I digg'd up dead men from their graves,
And set them upright at their dear friends' doors,
Even when their sorrows almost was forgot;
And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,
Have with my knife carved in Roman letters,
Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead.
Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willingly, as one would kill a fly,
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
But that I cannot do ten thousand more.

2. Berowne – *Love's Labour's Lost* by William Shakespeare

Act 3 Scene 1

Berowne

O, and I forsooth, in love
I, that have been love's whip?
A very beadle to a humorous sigh: a critic,
Nay, a night-watch constable.
A domineering pedant o'er the boy,
Then whom no mortal so magnificent!
This whimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy;
This senior-junior giant-dwarf, Don Cupid;
Regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms,
The anointed sovereign of sighs and groans:
Liege of all loiterers and malcontents:
Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces.
Sole emperor and great general
Of trotting 'paritors (O my little heart)
And I to be a corporal of his field,
And wear his colours like a tumbler's hoop.
What? I love, I sue, I seek a wife,
A woman, that is like a German clock,
Still a-repairing: ever out of frame,
And never going a right, being a watch:
But being watch'd that it may still go right!
Nay, to be perjured, which is worst of all:
And, among three, to love the worst of all,
A wightly wanton, with a velvet bro.
With two pitch-balls stuck in her face for eyes.
Ay, and by heaven, one that will do the deed
Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard.
And I to sigh for her, to watch for her,
To pray for her, go to: it is a plague
That Cupid will impose for my neglect
Of his almighty dreadful little might.
Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan,
Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.

3. Lewis – *King John* by William Shakespeare

Act 5 Scene 2

Lewis

Your grace shall pardon me, I will not back:
I am too high-born to be propertied
To be a secondary at control,
Or useful serving-man and instrument
To any sovereign state throughout the world.
Your breath first kindled the dead coal of wars
Between this chastised kingdom and myself,
And brought in matter that should feed this fire;
And now 'tis far too huge to be blown out
With that same weak wind, which enkindled it:
You taught me how to know the face of right,
Acquainted me with interest to this land,
Yea, thrust this enterprise into my heart,
And come ye now to tell me John hath made
His peace with Rome? What is that peace to me?
I (by the honour of my marriage-bed)
After young Arthur, claim this land for mine,
And now it is half-conquer'd, must I back
Because that John hath made his peace with Rome?
Am I Rome's slave? What penny hath Rome borne?
What men provided? What munition sent
To underprop this action? Is't not I
That undergo this charge? Who else but I,
And such as to my claim are liable,
Sweat in this business and maintain this war?
Have I not heard these islanders shout out
'Vive le roi', as I have bank'd their towns?
Have I not here the best cards for the game,
To win this easy match, play'd for a crown?
And shall I now give o'er the yielded set?
No, no, on my soul, it never shall be said.

4. Hotspur – *King Henry IV Part 1* by William Shakespeare

Act 1 Scene 2

Hotspur

My liege, I did deny no prisoners.
But, I remember when the fight was done,
When I was dry with rage, and extreme toil,
Breathless, and faint, leaning upon my sword,
Came there a certain lord, neat and trimly dress'd;
Fresh as a bridegroom, and his chin new reap'd,
Show'd like a stubble-land at harvest-home.
He was perfumed like a milliner,
And 'twixt his finger and his thumb, he held
A pouncet-box: which ever and anon
He gave his nose, and took't away again:
Who therewith angry, when it next came there,
Took it in snuff: and still he smiled and talk'd:
And as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
He call'd them untaught knaves, unmannerly,
To bring a slovenly unhandsome corpse
Betwixt the wind, and his nobility.
With many holiday and lady terms
He question'd me: amongst the rest, demanded
My prisoners, in your majesty's behalf.
I then, all smarting, with my wounds being cold,
(To be so pester'd with a popinjay)
Out of my grief, and my impatience,
Answer'd (neglectingly) I know not what,
He should, or he should not: for he made me mad
To see him shine so brisk and smell so sweet
And talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman,
Of guns and drums and wounds: God save the mark;
And telling me, the sovereign'st thing on earth
Was parmacety, for an inward bruise:
And that it was great pity, so it was,
This villanous salt-petre should be digg'd
Out of the bowels of the harmless earth,
Which many a good tall fellow had destroy'd
So cowardly. And but for these vile guns,
He would himself have been a soldier.
This bald, unjointed chat of his (my lord)
Made me to answer indirectly (as I said.)
And I beseech you, let not his report
Come current for an accusation
Betwixt my love, and your high majesty.

5. Angelo – *Measure for Measure* by William Shakespeare

Act 2 Scene 2

Angelo

From thee: even from thy virtue.
What's this? what's this? Is this her fault, or mine?
The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most? Ha?
Not she: nor doth she tempt: but it is I,
That, lying by the violet in the sun,
Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
Corrupt with virtuous season: Can it be,
That modesty may more betray our sense
Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough,
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there? O, fie, fie, fie:
What dost thou? or what art thou, Angelo?
Dost thou desire her foully, for those things
That make her good? O, let her brother live:
Thieves for their robbery have authority,
When judges steal themselves: what, do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again?
And feast upon her eyes? what is't I dream on?
O cunning enemy, that to catch a saint,
With saints dost bait thy hook: Most dangerous
Is that temptation, that doth goad us on;
To sin, in loving virtue: never could the strumpet
With all her double vigour, art, and nature,
Once stir my temper: but this virtuous maid
Subdues me quite: even till now,
When men were fond, I smiled, and wonder'd how.

6. Flamineo - *The White Devil* by John Webster

Act 1 Scene 3

Flamineo

Pray, what means have you
To keep me from the galleys, or the gallows?
My father prov'd himself a gentleman,
Sold all 's land, and like a fortunate fellow,
Died ere the money was spent. You brought me up
At Padua I confess, where I protest,
For want of means (the University judge me)
I have been fain to heel my tutor's stockings
At least seven years. Conspiring with a beard,
Made me a graduate, then to this duke's service:
I visited the court, whence I return'd -
More courteous, more lecherous by far,
But not a suit the richer - and shall I,
Having a path so open, and so free
To my preferment, still retain your milk
In my pale forehead? No, this face of mine
I 'll arm and fortify with lusty wine,
'Gainst shame and blushing.

7. Bosola – *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster

Act 5 Scene 2

Bosola.

O poor Antonio, though nothing be so needful
To thy estate as pity, yet I find
Nothing so dangerous. I must look to my footing;
In such slippery ice-pavements men had need
To be frost-nail'd well: they may break their necks else.
The precedent 's here afore me: How this man
Bears up in blood! seems fearless! Why, 'tis well:
Security some men call the suburbs of hell,
Only a dead wall between. Well, good Antonio,
I'll seek thee out; and all my care shall be
To put thee into safety from the reach
Of these most cruel biters, that have got
Some of thy blood already. It may be,
I'll join with thee in a most just revenge.
The weakest arm is strong enough, that strikes
With the sword of justice. Still methinks the Duchess
Haunts me: there, there: 'tis nothing but my melancholy.
O Penitence, let me truly taste thy cup,
That throws men down, only to raise them up!

8. Deflores – *The Changeling* by Middleton & Rowley

Act 2 Scene 1

Deflores

[Aside] Yonder's she.

What ever ails me, now a late especially,
I can as well be hang'd as refrain seeing her;
Some twenty times a day, nay not so little,
Do I force errands, frame ways and excuses
To come into her sight, and I have small reason for't,
And less encouragement; for she baits me still
Every time worse than other, does profess herself
The cruelest enemy to my face, in town,
At no hand can abide the sight of me,
As if danger, or ill luck hung in my looks.
I must confess my face is bad enough,
But I know far worse has better fortune,
And not endur'd alone, but doted on,
And yet such pick-hair'd faces, chins like witches,
Here and there five hairs, whispering in a corner,
As if they grew in fear one of another,
Wrinkles like troughs, where swine deformity swills
The tears of perjury that lie there like wash,
Fallen from the slimy and dishonest eye.
Yet such a one [plucks] sweets without restraint,
And has the grace of beauty to his sweet.
Though my hard fate has thrust me out to servitude,
I tumbled into th' world a gentleman.
She turns her blessed eye upon me now,
And I'll endure all storms before I part with 't.